

USS Liberty

A LOOK OVER MY SHOULDER: A Life in the Central Intelligence Agency

By Richard Helms with William Hood, Random House 2003

Book available at www.amazon.com and most other book stores.

Richard Helms was the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency from 1966-1973.

An excerpt from Pages 300/301 of the Helms book:

One of the most disturbing incidents in the six days [war between Israel and the surrounding Arab states] came on the morning of June 8[, 1967] when the Pentagon flashed(urgent top-priority precedence) a message that the U.S.S. Liberty, an unarmed U.S. Navy communications(spy) ship, was under attack in the Mediterranean, and that American fighters had been scrambled to defend the ship....

.... The following urgent reports showed that Israeli jet fighters and torpedo boats had launched the attack. The seriously damaged *Liberty* remained afloat, with thirty-four dead and more than a hundred wounded members of the crew.

Israeli authorities subsequently apologized for the accident, but few in Washington could believe that the ship had not been identified as an American naval vessel. Later, an interim intelligence memorandum concluded that the attack was a mistake and "not made in malice against the U.S." When additional evidence was available, more doubt was raised....

... This prompted my Deputy, Admiral Rufus Taylor, to write me his view of the incident. "To me, the picture thus far presents the distinct possibility that the Israelis knew that the *Liberty* might be their target and attacked anyway, either through confusion in Command and Control or through deliberate disregard of instructions on the part of subordinates."

The day after the attack, President Johnson, bristling with irritation, said to me, "*The New York Times* put that attack on the *Liberty* on an inside page. It should have been on the front page!"

I had no role in the board of inquiry that followed, or the board's finding that there could be no doubt that the Israeli's knew exactly what they were doing in attacking the *Liberty*. I have yet to understand why it was felt necessary to attack this ship or who ordered the attack.

(344 words in a 452 page book)



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